



THE OBSERVER

RECENT estimates fix the world's wheat production for the crop years 1914 and 1915 at a trifle over seven billion bushels, approximately twenty-six per cent of this total having been produced in United States. Canada, Argentine and Chili produced thirteen per cent of the total, and in view of the fact that the American continents consume a relatively small portion of their product, it is easy to understand the importance of the Western Hemisphere in its relationship to the World's flour bin. Popular opinion to the contrary, however, this relationship has not been particularly changed, if at all, by the European war. The world production of wheat for 1914 was approximately three and a quarter billion bushels. For 1915 it was increased to little more than three and three quarters billions, not all the increased production being outside the European countries. Indeed, despite the war, the wheat production in Europe for 1915 was approximately 170 million bushels greater than in 1914. The production in France fell off forty-two millions, while that of Russia in Europe increased eighty-seven millions, of Bulgaria seventeen millions and of Roumania fifty-nine millions. Australia shows a big falling off in production, but it is covered by increased production in British India and Egypt, so that after all there is little change in the production in the British colonies. With these figures as guides, may we not be mistaken in our notions that the war is so depleting the ranks of industry and decreasing production of food-stuffs that the battling nations must eventually starve each other to death?

INCIDENTALLY, consideration of world wheat crop figures for the past two years contributes toward conclusions that may well cause chestiness in Kansas. In 1914 and 1915 Kansas produced almost fifteen per cent of the wheat harvested in United States, and more than four per cent of the world's production. In view of the fact that Kansas furnishes something less than two per cent of the population of the United States and so small a percentage of the world population as to be almost negligible, it is not extravagant to claim that Kansas farmers are going farther than farmers anywhere else in the world toward furnishing the world's flour.

AND while we are adjusted to consideration of crop statistics, what is the particular advantage of so much governmental duplication in crop

reporting? Is it just another illustration of the haphazard hit-and-miss methods employed in the expenditure of public funds, or do the people who pay the taxes get a real benefit? Of the practical value of dependable crop reports there is no doubt. But why have both federal and state reports? So far as Kansas state reports are concerned, they are unquestionably preferable to those of the federal department because, one year with another, they have been found to be the more accurate. The Kansas reports answer all practical needs, but still the federal government continues to make its own canvass of crop conditions in this state, at the expense of both money and effort that might be economically employed elsewhere, and to put out its own estimates. Why, when a state has so dependable a reporting organization as has Kansas, does not the federal government save money and effort by adopting the state's figures? These queries are not prompted by objection to federal crop reports, nor would it be any particular advantage to the state that its own reports were used in making up federal statistical compilations, aside from the public saving in stopping useless duplication. And this character of duplication is not confined to crop reporting. It is encountered in practically every avenue of governmental activity, and it is unquestionably an important contributing cause to the rising cost of government. All of which takes us back to the popular agreement that we can all be mighty thankful that private business in this country is less loosely managed than public business. For if Kansas farmers ran their farms as carelessly as the people permit their government to be run, all the things said of Kansas by prophets of evil in the early 'nineties would be true, and more too.

THE off-year revival of interest in road-building is now in full swing in Kansas. "Good roads" meetings are of almost daily occurrence somewhere in the state. All sorts of proposals are being made for road improvement, from conscription of motorists to work the roads, to the issue of a billion dollars, more or less, in state bonds for road improvement. And the public seems intensely interested in all the meetings and proposals, but there are no definite signs that this winter's revival will pass the stage where speeches are made and resolutions passed. Kansas has been making "good resolutions," so far as road improvement is concerned, every other year for a decade or more. How-

ever, Kansas roads will not respond to this treatment as do those of the region said to be "paved with good resolutions." It is all right to stir interest in road improvement this winter, if it can be kept stirred until the legislature convenes in January, 1917. But the trouble heretofore has been that converts to the cause

of good roads at off-year revivals have been permitted to backslide before the legislature could be convened and take the steps really requisite to the development of a consistent road improvement policy in Kansas. What the state needs more than it needs anything else in this connection is the development of an organized public sentiment behind a demand for an amendment to the Constitution which will enable the state to really do something toward building good roads. As the thing stands now the state's hands are tied to prevent it from building public highways.

HOW much a symbol means to humans! A few days ago a symbol of the American conception of free government was returned to Philadelphia after a tour that had taken it to the Panama-Pacific Exposition at San Francisco, and through most of the great states of the plains, mountains and Western coast regions. And everywhere it was taken, and opportunity was given for public view, eager thousands thronged. And it was just an old bell, cracked and time worn. Its tones have not sounded in a century. But because they rang so clearly long ago, with a message of liberty to an aspiring people, the multitudes crowded to it as to a shrine. And the old bell, symbol that it is, has contributed toward the renewed consecration of thousands upon thousands of Americans to the cause of popular government. Silent, it continues to obey the injunction engraved upon its surface: "Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land to all the Inhabitants Thereof."

NEITHER verdicts of coroner's juries, nor emotional consideration of motives will change the fact that we are on thin ice, when we consent as a whole to the course of the Chicago physician who is said to have declined to give treatment that would have saved a life, because of belief that the life would have been worthless if preserved. The doctor may have been correct in his conclusion, in this particular case, that to have preserved the life would have been to burden society with a degenerate. But who can say positively that he was correct? Unfortunately, medical men and surgeons do not practice an exact science. They can not avoid the laws of Nature, no more can they construe them accurately, always. So it will be better after all if physicians stick to the code under which they are required to do everything in their power to save life, rather than that they

be encouraged to determine in each case, as it arises, whether proper and possible steps shall be taken to keep the vital spark burning. With all due respect to the motives of those who indorse the course of the Chicago doctor, it seems to place too dangerous a responsibility on the members of a profession whose judgments, like those of all humans, are fallible and uncertain.

A Choice

MRS. Davenport gave her two children some fruit one afternoon. Handing it to Joseph, she bade him let the little sister have the first choice.

Shortly after, she called the boy to her and said:

"Joseph, I noticed that your little sister took a very small apple. Did you let her have her choice, as I told you to?"

"Yes, mother," replied the boy, "I told her she could have the little one or none at all, and she chose the little one."

ROAD TO HELL

In 1828 the school board of Lancaster, Ohio, refused to permit the schoolhouse to be used for the discussion of the question as to whether railroads were practical or not, and the matter was recently called to mind by an old document that reads in part as follows:

"You are welcome to use the schoolhouse to debate all proper questions in, but such things as railroads and telegraphs are impossibilities and rank infidelity. There is nothing in the word of God about them. If God has designed that his intelligent creatures should travel at the frightful speed of fifteen miles an hour, by steam, he would have clearly foretold through his holy prophets. It is a device of Satan to lead immortal souls down to hell."
—*Railway and Locomotive Engineering*

ON THE FIRING LINE

Fate called a quitter from the crowd
And barred his pathway to success;
At each new blow he wailed aloud
And faltered in the strife and stress;
And step by step Fate dragged him low
The easier each passing day,
And yet he struck no counter blow
Or ever upward fought his way.

And at the end he cursed the Fate
That swept him to such wretched state.

Fate picked a Fighter from the throng
And barred his pathway to the goal;
At each new blow, with purpose strong,
He fought with ever braver soul;
And step by step he fought Fate back
The easier each passing day,
And soon before the staunch attack
Fate fled in terror from his way.

And at the end he blessed Fate's whim
That helped to make a man of him.

Which reminds us again of Col. John Trotwood Moore's immortal refrain: "Only the game fish swim upstream."

Swimming with the current is the greatest softener in the game. Walking with nothing but success is one of the greatest of all disasters. The finish can only be a degeneration unto pure fat, for both the heart and the brain.